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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [AM](#)
SUBJECT: TUMANYAN OUT, GEVORKIAN IN -- PRESIDENTIAL
STAFFING CHANGES

Classified By: Amb. John M. Evans for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) President Kocharian accepted Chief of Staff Artashes Tumanyan's resignation on February 24, then immediately named his long-time senior assistant, Armen Gevorkian, in Tumanyan's place. Although Gevorkian had been the de-facto head of Kocharian's administration for a number of years, Tumanyan's recent establishment of a political party and a desire to formalize Gevorkian's role appear to have led to Tumanyan's "resignation." No friend of democracy and already the key gatekeeper in the Presidential Administration, Gevorkian's new position as presidential coordinator of the Lincy Foundation grants (a job specifically linked to the Chief of Staff position) is likely to be the only substantive change in business as usual for the time being. End Summary.

TUMANYAN "RESIGNS"

¶2. (C) Artashes Tumanyan, President Kocharian's former Chief of Staff, was unceremoniously relieved of his duties on February 24, only a few weeks after announcing that he had established the "New Country" (Nor Yerkir) political party. While the presidential press office announced that Tumanyan had resigned, Presidential Spokesman Viktor Soghomonian earlier pointed out in an interview that no one from the presidential staff would be allowed to use the resources of the presidential office for the benefit of any political party. Presidential Security Advisor Garnik Isaghulyan told us February 27 that Kocharian had forced Tumanyan to resign after issuing "several" warnings. While many political observers had anticipated Tumanyan's resignation later in the fall (with the run-up to 2007 elections), his departure this early in the political season came as a surprise. (Note: Tumanyan had headed also up the Armenian-Iranian Commission; it is not yet clear who will take over that portfolio. End Note.)

COMMENT: GEVORKIAN CHIEF OF STAFF IN NAME, TOO

¶3. (C) Armen Gevorkian, at 33 young enough that his detractors delight in referring to him as "Armenchik" (little Armen), was immediately named to the position of Chief of Staff. Although he has long been de-facto chief of staff, and the key gatekeeper to the president, having the position formally also puts Gevorkian into the potentially lucrative position as presidential coordinator in charge of managing the private U.S.-based Lincy Foundation grants (USD 60

million). Managing the president's schedule has already given him considerable clout, but with the new job Gevorkian will also have a formal seat on the Security Council. While Gevorkian will have the tools to deliver on any commitment he chooses to make, he is not a natural supporter of democratic reform. It was Gevorkian who, in the run-up to the flawed November 27 referendum, convoked the OSCE Head of Office and read him the riot act for pressing so hard for more international observers. Gevorkian is also strongly suspected to be the originator of Kocharian's mistrust of NDI.

GEVORKIAN BIO NOTES

14. (C) First hired in 1997 as a staffer by current opposition politician Aram Sargsian when he was Prime Minister, Gevorkian went on to work for Kocharian when he became Prime Minister. Gevorkian has been President Kocharian's assistant since 1998. A graduate of the Orenburg (Russia) Pedagogical Institute as well as the St. Petersburg School for Public Administration, Gevorkian also earned an MA from the Twente University in the Netherlands. Gevorkian is married.
EVANS